

CREATED 2013

TOPICS:

- **Area and Pasture management**
- **Nutrition**
- **Shelter**
- **Water**

Horse Fact Sheet

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

FACT SHEET

Onslow County is known for its warm weather and diversity in agriculture. Many residents are not native to eastern North Carolina and live in residential or smaller parcels of land. This can lead to unintentional overstocking as people adjust to horsekeeping in our coastal areas. New residents should consider several factors including the needed area per horse, pasture management, nutrition, shelter, and water.

It is recommended 2-3 acres of pasture per horse in Onslow County. Typically a mix of warm and cool season grass are used to achieve year round pasture. Common warm season grasses include bermudagrass and bahia. Cool season grasses include endo-phyte free fescue and annual ryegrass. Grass mixes should be appropriate for your site will depend on location and soil type. Your county extension agent can assist you in choosing grasses and appropriate establishment timing. Even with appropriate pasture choices and management may still be necessary to supply feeding supplements at some points of the season and during drought conditions.

Many coastal horseowners choose to maintain a drylot. This small paddock that is used to confine the horse during initial pasture establishment, seasonal renew or to protect the pasture from overgrazing. In areas where adequate pasture cannot be maintained or established, drylots may be the primary way to care for the horse. Drylots vary in size, 400-500 square feet is the minimum amount of area needed per horse. Horses in drylots setting should have access to ample free choice hay.

Most horses perform best when given access to good quality grass and hay forage. Plan on a horse eating 2% of its body weight in forage per day. In a drylot or stall setting, this would mean a 1000 lb horse would consume 20 pounds of hay per day. Supplementing forage with concentrate (grain) is necessary particularly for horses in heavy work, pregnant or lactating mares, or senior horses. If necessary, concentrates should constitute 20-30% of the diet, 4-6 lbs for 1000lb horse, and not exceed 50% of the diet. A variety of concentrated rations are commercially available for horses. Typically these diets rely on oats, barely, and corn in properly balanced and supplemented with vitamins and minerals to satisfy the horse's nutritional needs. Horses kept on pasture or hay diets may be supplemented with vitamins and minerals.

Shelter should be provided for horses in both pasture and drylot settings. Shelter can consist of a run in access to a stall, or barn, or as simple as two- or three-sided shed with a sloping roofline to repel water. Alternatively, horses may be kept in a barn or stall during inclement weather.

Horses need access to clean, fresh water at all times. Horses will consume 8-12 gallons of water per day. Water buckets and troughs will need to be cleaned regularly during the summer months to control algae and mosquitoes and to encourage horses to drink frequently.

Contact your local extension agent for more recommendations and details at 910-455-5873.

